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ABSTRACT

To determine the extent of changes being implemented in the middle grades in Wisconsin school districts, 532 surveys were mailed to Wisconsin middle level schools that include grades 7 and 8; the return rate was 81 percent. After reviewing the development and content of the survey, this document relates survey findings to the eight principles of comprehensive middle schools found in "Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century" (Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development) and to a ninth principle derived from related literature. A table and description of survey results is presented for each of 35 aspects of middle-level schools grouped under the following six topics: (1) leadership and organizational strategies; (2) advisor-advisee programs; (3) instructional strategies; (4) curriculum; (5) student activities; and (6) other middle-level topics. A list of characteristics is given for each of the nine principles of the ideal middle school, and a final section offers six strategies for implementation of middle-level school change. Appended are the actual survey used, a glossary, and a section on the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual characteristics of middle-grade students. (24 references) (CLA)

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The MIDDLE LEVEL GRADES

Where We Are; Where We Need To Be

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The Middle Level Grades in Wisconsin: Where We Are; Where We Need to Be

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Foreword

It is time to re-examine the educational experiences we are providing for middle level students. With ongoing complex and often unpredictable changes in our society, young adolescents are increasingly at risk for school failure, drug and alcohol abuse, pregnancy, and violence. Instruction and programming for the middle level grades must face these issues. In addition, today's economy needs students who are skilled in using higher level thinking and problem solving strategies and who are capable of working cooperatively with one another.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development in *Turning Points, Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* stated that most American junior high and middle schools do not meet the developmental needs of young adolescents.

> Most young adolescents attend massive, impersonal schools, learn from unconnected and seemingly irrelevant curricula, know well and trust few adults in school, and lack access to health care and counseling. Millions of these young people fail to receive the guidance and attention they need to become healthy, thoughtful, and productive adults.

This document, *The Middle Level Grades in Wisconsin: Where We Are; Where We Need to Be*, provides a research tool for school districts to examine their middle level practices and programs. Administrators and teachers must work together to improve instruction and programming for middle level students. Without this continuing effort, opportunities to affect the growth and development of early adolescents will be diluted or misdirected. The goal of this report is to provide information which will help educators renew and refocus the improvement process.

Herbert J. Grover, State Superintendent

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Chapter 1
Overview

Wisconsin school districts are initiating and implementing significant changes in their middle level grades. To determine the extent of these changes, the authors decided to survey the middle level practices and programs of Wisconsin's public schools' middle level grades. Some of these results were also compared with a recent national study which surveyed middle level schools across the United States.

The authors met with Dr. Robert Gomoll of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and received approval, financial support, and encouragement to proceed with the study. The Wisconsin Association for Middle Level Education and the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators-Middle Level Education Commission co-sponsored the study.

Development of the Survey

As a first step, the authors examined the national study, completed in 1989 by the National Middle School Association (NMSA), titled *Earmarks of the Schools in the Middle: A Research Report.* This study compared information regarding middle schools in 1987-88 with middle schools in 1967-68. Where appropriate, information from that study was compared with data from the Wisconsin schools. While most of the questions from the national survey were not used, they served as stimuli in designing the Wisconsin survey. After the authors developed a draft of the survey, they asked a number of principals and teachers from Wisconsin middle schools to examine it. Following their review, the survey took on its final form.

The authors mailed five hundred thirty-two surveys to Wisconsin middle level schools, those schools that include grades seven and eight, in October, 1989. If grade six was aligned with grades seven and eight, information about grade six was included in the study. Of the 532 surveys mailed, 433 were returned for a return rate of 81 percent.

Although the authors tried to develop a survey that contained unambiguous items, respondents did not always interpret the questions as they were intended. When tabulating the results of the survey, the authors deleted any vague responses.

Content of the Survey

The survey addressed most of the practices and programs that are taking place in Wisconsin public middle school grades. To organize the practices and programs, this document presents the following topic areas.

Part 1 Leadership and Organizational Strategies
Part 2 Advisor-Advisee Programs
Part 3 Instructional Strategies
Part 4 Curriculum
Part 5 Student Activities
Part 6 Other Middle Level Topics
Part 7 Middle Level Programming Concerns
Part 8 Promising Program Initiatives

A list of principles that embodies the practices or programs of the ideal middle school precedes the information gathered in the survey (Chapter 2). These principles provide a framework within which to examine the survey data and draw information that will guide school improvement initiatives for the middle level grades.

Survey Findings Related to the Principles of Effective Middle Level Schools.

Effective middle level schools share common principles. The list below is drawn from the eight principles of a comprehensive middle school program as presented by the Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development in *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*. The ninth principle is synthesized from literature about effective middle level schools. Findings from the survey data follow each characteristic . These principles and their corresponding characteristics are detailed in Chapter 3 of this report, "The Ideal Middle Level School".

Principle 1

Schools should be a place where close, trusting relationships with adults and peers create a climate for personal growth and intellectual development.

Findings: Wisconsin's middle level grades are characterized by their differences in organizational patterns. There are wide variations in what administrators consider to be the suitable grade structure for students and teachers (Table 1, p. 5). Fewer than half of the schools have an interdisciplinary structure that allows for close and personal relationships between students and staff (Table 4, p. 7). Almost half of the schools reported a teacher-based (advisor-advisee) guidance program which allows each student the opportunity to interact with peers and staff about school and personal concerns (Table 9, p. 9). One fourth of the students in the middle level grades participate in this program daily (Table 11, p. 10). Advisor-advisee program activities vary, but in most cases include orientation activities, discussion of personal concerns, and team/homeroom/school projects (Table 12, p. 10).

Principle 2

Every student in the middle grades should learn to think critically through mastery of an appropriate body of knowledge, lead a healthy life, behave ethically and lawfully, and assume the responsibilities of citizenship in a pluralistic society.

Findings: Survey findings with regard to this principle are limited. The use of instructional strategies aimed at helping students improve problem-solving and critical thinking skills through greater involvement in the learning process varies greatly in middle level grades (Table 14, p. 12). Students are exposed to a wide variety of subject areas (Table 20, p. 16). Certain basic subjects are required in all schools through the state-legislated regular instruction standard (121.02 (L)). This statute requires that reading, language arts, math, science, social studies, and physical education be offered weekly.

Principle 3

All young adolescents should have the opportunity to succeed in every aspect of the middle grade program, regardless of previous achievement or the pace at which they learn.

Findings: The middle grades offer students successful experiences through a number of activities. Some of these take place in advisory groups where teachers meet with small groups to offer support and guidance to students (Table 14, p. 12). Special strategies are used to a limited extent with certain populations such as at-risk or gifted and talented students (Tables 18, 19, pp. 14-15). The practice of tracking by ability grouping is widely used, especially in certain subject areas (Tables 16, 17, p. 13). Intramurals, those athletic activities in which all students participate and where cooperation is emphasized, are offered in less than 33 percent of the schools (Table 26, p. 22). To build self-esteem, many schools feature programs such as recognizing students on their birthdays and using academic and behavior honor rolls (Table 29, p. 24).

Principle 4

Decisions concerning the experiences of middle grade students should be made by the adults who know them best.

Findings: Time for teachers to meet and plan cooperatively during the school day is available in about one fourth of Wisconsin's middle level schools (Table 6, p. 7). Only about one half of the staffs with middle level grades participate in shared decision making for the school's programs (Table 8, p. 8). Twelve percent of the responding principals indicated they wanted to address this issue (Table 34, p. 28), while eleven percent indicated they had exemplary/promising programs in place to enable shared decision making (Table 35, p. 29). Other adults important to children are referenced in principle seven.

Principle 5

Teachers in middle grade schools should be selected and specially educated to teach young adolescents.

Findings: While the survey did not address pre-service training, a variety of staff development activities have been used with teachers already employed at the middle level grades (Table 33, p. 27). Eighty percent of the respondents noted ongoing programs available to staff.

Principle 6

Young adolescents must be healthy in order to learn.

Findings: Schools are promoting health and fitness through class content and activities. Health is a required class in a majority of middle schools (Table 20, p. 16). Twenty-six percent of the schools report a regularly scheduled activity period during the school day (Table 22, p. 20). A variety of co-curricular opportunities are available to students (Table 23, p. 20). Intramural and interscholastic activities are also available to students in some middle level schools (Tables 23, 26, 27, pp. 20-23).

Principle 7

Families and middle grade schools must be allied through trust and respect if young adolescents are to succeed in school.

Findings: While all schools communicate student progress to parents, about half have a formal parent organization such as a PTO/PTA. Forty-one percent involve parents through par-

ent advisory groups or committees (Table 28, p. 24). In one-third of the schools, the personal and social development of students is reported to parents (Table 29, p. 24).

Principle 8

Schools and community organizations should share responsibility for each middle grade student's success.

Findings: Twelve percent of the respondents indicated that they hoped to implement a program in which youth participated in a community service program (Table 34, p. 28). Six percent of the principals indicated they had an exemplary/promising program for youth service in the community (Table 35, p. 29).

Principle 9

The mission statement (philosophy and goals) of the school must reflect the needs and characteristics of young adolescents as well as a commitment to meet those needs.

Findings: Sixty percent of the principals reported the focus for school improvement in their school was to provide a program specifically aimed at students in this age group (Table 32, p. 26).

This report suggests that there is a great difference between the ideal principles for effective middle level education and the current status of Wisconsin middle schools. The findings, the "real" practices and programs, follow in Chapter 2. The "ideal" principles and practices are discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents recommendations for middle level program improvement based on the perceived discrepancies between the "ideal" principles and the "real" practices. A glossary appears on page 58 of the appendixes.

Chapter 2
What's Going on in Wisconsin's Middle Level Grades

Part 1: Leadership and Organizational Strategies

■ Table 1

Grade Configurations

The middle level schools in Wisconsin encompass many different combinations of grades as indicated in Table 1. The data for Table 1 are from the Bureau for Education Statistics, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Most frequently, Wisconsin's middle level schools contain grades 6-8. This is more than four times greater than the number of junior highs with grades 7-9. These data are similar to grade configurations reported in the National Middle School Association (NMSA) study. The table below displays the number and percent of middle schools with their corresponding grade configurations from the Wisconsin and NMSA surveys.

Grade Configuration	Number of Schools	Percent of those Responding	NMSA (Percent)
4-8	8	1	
5-9	46	10	11
6-8	133	31	40
7-8	83	19	24
7-9	37	8	20
7-12	26	6	
K-12	7	1	
K/1-8	81	19	
Other	3	0	

■ Table 2

Instructional Periods

The instructional day in 59 percent of middle level schools is eight class periods per day as shown in Table 2. For schools with grades 5-8, 6-8, and 7-8, the percent of schools with seven and eight period days is similar. However, seventeen percent of 6-8 schools have eight periods while seven percent of 7-9 schools have a seven period day. (Note: In this table along with several others, cross-tabulation was done with grade configurations to further analyze the data.) Even though only a small number of schools reported block scheduling, many schools attempt to provide blocks of time for their interdisciplinary program within the normal period schedule. The corresponding data follows.

Number of Periods	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
6	9	2
7	106	25
8	243	59
9	24	5
Block Scheduling	24	5
Other	3	1

■ Table 3

Length of Instructional Periods

As shown in Table 3, the majority of schools reported instructional periods ranging from 45-49 minutes with 28 percent reporting 40-44 minutes to be their class length. The table presents the number and percent of schools with the indicated length of instructional periods.

Length of Periods (Minutes)	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
35-39	3	1
40-44	112	28
45-49	221	54
50-54	63	16
More than 54	3	1
Varies	2	1

■ Table 4

Interdisciplinary Organization

In the survey, an interdisciplinary organization is defined as two or more teachers working with the same group of students utilizing a block scheduled period of time. Thirty-five percent of the schools indicated they are using this organizational structure. Fifty percent of the 6-8 schools and 41 percent of the 7-9 schools reported an interdisciplinary organization (cross tabulation of the data).

Interdisciplinary Organization	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Yes	149	35
No	273	65

Table 4 shows the number and percent of schools that utilize an interdisciplinary organization and those that do not.

■ Table 5

Interdisciplinary Team Subjects

Table 5 reveals that between 83 and 89 percent of the middle level schools with interdisciplinary teams include the following subjects as part of the team curriculum: language arts, science, math, and social studies. Reading is included 77 percent of the time. Reading as a separate subject is included to a lesser extent. This may be due to the integration of reading in the language arts program or the inclusion of reading instruction in each content area. The corresponding numbers and percents are presented in Table 5.

Subject	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Language Arts	133	89
Social Studies	131	87
Science	126	84
Mathematics	125	83
Reading	115	77
Other	26	17

■ Table 6

Common Team Planning Time

An important component of an interdisciplinary organization is the common planning period. This period allows teachers to cooperatively plan for subject integration in units of instruction and to discuss student needs and instructional strategies. Seventy-eight percent of the schools with interdisciplinary teams reported common planning time. Table 6 represents the number and percent of schools with an interdisciplinary organization that have a common team planning time and those that do not.

Team Planning Time	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Yes	117	78
No	32	21

■ Table 7

Compensation for Team Leaders

Table 7 displays the number and percent of schools with an interdisciplinary team that reported compensation for team leaders and those that did not. As indicated, 26 percent of the middle level schools with interdisciplinary teams reported that team leaders are compensated. In some of these situations where team leaders are not compensated, responsibilities may be rotated or shared.

Compensation	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Yes	39	26
No	76	51
Does not apply	32	21

■ Table 8

Decision Making in Middle Level Schools

Middle level principals incorporate a number of strategies to increase communication and empower staff members in making decisions as shown in Table 8. One half of all respondents reported that grade level staff meet regularly. Forty-two percent reported faculty councils or cabinets and regular meetings for department teachers. The following table indicates the number and percent of schools that reported decision making groups that meet regularly.

Decision-Making Groups	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Grade Level Staff	215	50
Department Staff	181	42
Faculty Council/Cabinet	179	42
School Improvement Teams	164	38
Team/House Staff	138	32
Other	69	16

Part 2: Advisor-Advisee Programs

■ Table 9

Teacher Advisory Programs

Middle level schools are sometimes referred to as "guidance schools" in literature about effective middle schools. Providing assistance to help students with their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development is considered a major tenet of a quality middle school.

The survey asked principals whether or not their school has a teacher-based guidance program. Table 9 indicates that almost half of the middle level schools in Wisconsin have some type of program to respond to the students' need for such a program. Forty to sixty percent of schools with 5-8, 6-8, 7-8, and K/1-8 reported a teacher-based guidance program. Only 16 percent of the 7-9 schools have this kind of program. This indicates that schools without grade nine more often focus on the students total educational experience rather than on specific classes or subjects.

The percent of middle level schools in Wisconsin with a teacher based guidance program is higher than the 39 percent across the United States reported in the NMSA study.

Teacher-Based Guidance Program	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Yes	199	48
No	223	52

■ Table 10

Faculty Involved in Advisory Programs

Table 10 presents the number and percent of schools with different staff members who function as guidance program advisors. It indicates that of non-teaching members of the middle grades staff who participate as advisors, the largest number are resource teachers (special education, gifted and talented, reading, etc.) along with the counselors. In some schools, licensed teacher aides, school nurses, psychologists, and social workers are guidance program advisors.

Staff Members	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Resource Teachers	124	62
Administrators	72	36
Counselors	139	29
Media Specialist	59	29
Others	25	12

■ Table 11

Frequency of Advisory Periods

Table 11 shows the number and percent of schools that reported different frequencies of advisory group meetings. Almost half of the schools with a teacher-based advisory program schedule this activity on a daily basis. Seventeen percent reported meeting once a week. Others reported a wide variation in meeting times. The percent of Wisconsin schools that reported advisory group meetings each day is considerably less than that reported in the NMSA study. This may be explained by the fact that while one period per day is scheduled, there are activities other than guidance activities that take place during the advisory period as indicated in Table 13.

Frequency	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding	NMSA
Every day	93	48	77
Four/week	0	0	1
Three/week	2	1	3
Two/week	16	8	10
One/week	33	17	10
Twice/month	10	5	
Other	16	8	

■ Table 12

Length of Advisory Meetings

Table 12 displays the number and percent of schools that reported different lengths of advisory group meetings. About 50 percent of the schools indicated that the length of their advisory group meeting times lasts from 16-35 minutes. Some meet for less than 15 minutes and others for over 46 minutes. Those with longer class periods most likely are scheduled during a regular class period. The percent of schools with an advisory group meeting time of 15 minutes or less in Wisconsin is considerably less than in the national study.

Minutes	Number of Schools (Wis)	Percent of Those Responding (Wis)	Percent (NMSA)
0-15	19	9	40
16-20	30	15	19
21-25	23	12	12
26-30	43	22	11
31-35	3	1	1
36-40	6	3	4
41-45	26	13	5

■ Table 13

Advisory Group Activities

Table 13 presents the number and percent of schools that include different activities in their advisory program. The highest percent of activities in the advisory program focuses on personal growth concerns of the middle level students. This reflects the primary goal for the establishment of such a program. Activities reported by at least 50 percent of the schools include orientation to both the middle school and the high school and career information. Silent sustained reading, student clubs, and intramurals were also mentioned by significant populations. In the "other" category, schools reported such diverse activities as study skills, guided study, goal setting, team/school projects, wellness activities, problem-solving activities, parent-student conferences, and alcohol and other drug awareness presentations.

Activities	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Personal Growth Concerns	165	82
Orientation Activities Toward the Middle School	150	75
Career Information	135	67
Orientation Activities Toward the High School	114	57
Silent Sustained Reading	97	48
Student Clubs & Activities	88	44
Intramurals	39	19
Other	48	24

Part 3: Instructional Strategies

■ Table 14

Types of Instructional Strategies

Current literature on effective middle level practices supports the use of instructional strategies that actively involve students in the learning process, that provide opportunities for enrichment, and that make connections between different subject areas. Responses by principals, as noted in Table 14, indicate that the use of a variety of strategies is an area needing further attention and development. On the positive side, enrichment (79 percent) and computer aided instruction (68 percent) occur to some extent or to a significant degree. Cooperative learning, inquiry teaching, role-playing/simulation, and integration of subject matter (interdisciplinary units) are all strategies that appear to be under-utilized in grades six to eight. The following table indicates the number and percent of schools that use these various instructional strategies and to what extent.

Strategies	Significant		Some		Small		None	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Enrichment Activities	119	27	224	52	54	12	1	0
Computer Aided Instruction	74	17	218	51	112	26	7	1
Cooperative Learning	33	7	204	47	144	33	20	4
Inquiry Teaching	35	8	187	43	119	27	25	5
Role Playing/Simulation	10	2	190	44	168	39	15	3
Integration of Subject Matter	54	12	158	37	122	28	38	8

■ Table 15

Computer Aided Instruction

Table 15 displays the number and percent of schools that reported various types of computer aided instruction. It can be seen that of the types of computer aided instruction, word processing was most frequently reported with 90 percent of principals noting students using this activity. Simulation games are used by 83 percent of the schools followed by recreational games, used by 56 percent of the schools.

Type of Computer Aided Instruction	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Word Processing	336	90
Simulation Games	337	83
Recreational Games	229	56
Data Base File Management	119	29
Spreadsheet	101	25

■ Table 16

Extent of Ability Grouping

Dividing students into groups based on ability or prior achievement is commonly known as tracking. Tracking is one of the most controversial issues in American schools. Dominant research findings call tracking ineffective, yet the majority of schools nationwide continue to organize students into ability-grouped "tracks." Eighty-two percent of the principals reported the use of ability grouping to a limited or significant extent (Table 16). Only 16 percent reported no use of tracking. The table below provides the number and percent of schools that indicated their status of ability grouping.

Status of Ability Grouping	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Not used in any subject area	69	16
Used to a limited extent	303	71
Used to a significant extent	49	11

■ Table 17

Ability Grouping by Subjects

Ability grouping is most frequently used in the subject areas of mathematics and reading (Table 17). The number of classes grouped by ability increases each year from the sixth through the eighth grade. Grouping in science, social studies, and language arts is less frequent as 14-26 percent reported tracking in those subjects by eighth grade. Using grouping for enrichment is more prevalent in all grades than for remediation. The exception is reading classes, where tracking is more often used for remediation. The following table presents the number and percent of schools that reported subjects where ability grouping is used.

	Grade Six				Grade 7				Grade 8			
	Remediation		Enrichment		Remediation		Enrichment		Remediation		Enrichment	
Subject	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Mathematics	126	35	138	39	188	53	227	64	194	55	261	74
Reading	164	46	140	39	201	57	154	43	197	55	156	44
Science	14	3	30	8	45	12	58	16	45	12	65	18
Social Studies	14	3	24	6	41	11	51	14	41	11	52	14
Language Arts	55	15	52	14	86	24	88	25	88	25	95	26

■ Table 18

Gifted and Talented Strategies

Meeting the needs of students that districts have identified as gifted and/or talented occurs through a variety of practices in the middle level grades. Table 18 shows the number and percent of schools that reported different procedures used to meet these needs.

Enrichment is most frequently reported within the regular classroom (85 percent). The use of resource teachers (54 percent), tracking (46 percent), and accelerated classes (45 percent) follow. A variety of other promising practices occur to varying degrees in grades 6-8 as noted in Table 18. Some of the procedures identified by schools in the "other" category are differentiation of assignments, the Invent America program, Odyssey of the Mind, Future Problem-Solving, before and after school and weekend programs, magnet schools, seminars, guidance activities, and leadership opportunities.

Procedures for Gifted and Talented Students	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Accelerate Classes	194	45
Accelerate Grades	80	18
Compacting Curriculum	125	29
Enrichment in Classroom	364	85
Independent Study	165	38
Mentoring	84	19
Mini-Courses	80	18
Pull-Out Program	154	36
Resource Teachers	233	54
Tracking (Ability Grouping)	197	46
Tutor Others	108	25
Other	28	6

■ Table 19

At-Risk Strategies

Table 19 indicates that approximately 80 percent of principals reported special education programs and curriculum modifications as the procedures most often used for meeting the needs of at-risk students. Referral to other agencies, the use of resource teachers, remedial courses, tutoring, and reducing assignment requirements are frequent strategies in 50-70 percent of the middle level grades. Other strategies listed by schools include special study skills programs, family intervention programs, teacher advocates, staff consultation teams, mentoring, after school study halls, small class size, summer programs, and support groups. The corresponding numbers and percents follow.

Procedures for At-Risk Students	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Alternate Course Requirements	130	30
Being Tutored	266	62
Curriculum Modification	339	79
Mini-Courses	27	6
Pull-Out Program	168	39
Reduce Assignments	214	50
Reduce Requirements	133	31
Referral to Other Agencies	299	70
Remedial Courses	272	63
Resource Teachers	266	61
Small Group Meetings	178	41
Special Education Programs	353	82
Other	36	8

Part 4: Curriculum

■ Table 20

Required and Elective Exploratory Courses

While language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics courses are taught in all middle level grades, a variety of other courses are required or offered as electives. Table 20 reflects the diverse course offerings in Wisconsin middle level grades and reports by percent whether they are required or elective courses. A number of observations emerge from these data.

- Forty-eight percent or more of the schools reported art, health, and reading in grades six, seven, and eight as required rather than elective.
- Art, foreign language, and general music are more frequently offered as electives in grades seven and eight than in grade six.
- Spanish is the most frequently offered foreign language in grades six, seven, and eight.
- Family and consumer education (FACE) and technology education are more often required than elective in grades six and seven in those schools that offer the subjects. In grade eight this ratio decreases to about half elective and half required.
- Band and choir are offered in 83-94 percent of seventh and eighth grades, and in 61-93 percent of all sixth grades.
- Typing as a separate course is required more often in Wisconsin than at a national level.
- Reading declines as a required course by about 30 percent between sixth and eighth grade.
- Computers as a required course in Wisconsin middle level grades lags behind similar grades in the NMSA study.
- Health is required in 50-61 percent of grades six, seven, and eight. This trails slightly behind the frequency with which health is offered in the NMSA study.
- Career education in grades 6-8 is offered more frequently in Wisconsin than in the national study.

Subject		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8	
		WIS	NMSA	WIS	NMSA	WIS	NMSA
Foreign Language	Required		6		9		8
	French	7		7		2	
	German	3		3		0	
	Spanish	9		10		5	
	Elective		10		25		38
	French	4		16		25	
	German	3		9		18	
	Spanish	5		19		34	
Music	Required		53		36		25
	Band	1		1		0	
	Chorus	8		3		3	
	Orchestra	0		0		0	
	General Music	72		30		16	
	Elective		14		18		20
	Band	93		94		92	
	Chorus	61		83		88	
	Orchestra	27		26		26	
	General Music	16		33		36	

Table 20 Continued

Subject		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8	
		WIS	NMSA	WIS	NMSA	WIS	NMSA
Art	Required	91	64	64	50	48	39
	Elective	5	17	30	36	44	46
Family & Consumer Ed.	Required	22	32	39	37	28	31
	Elective	3	6	8	30	25	44
Technology Education	Required	27	33	42	38	36	31
	Elective	3	9	16	29	31	45
Reading	Required	91	84	71	70	59	60
	Elective	0	1	7	5	10	10
Agriculture	Required	1	1	7	1	11	1
	Elective	1	5	5	7	8	10
Careers	Required	24	6	23	11	29	13
	Elective	2	5	3	7	4	10
Computers	Required	39	40	30	40	28	38
	Elective	2	3	2	7	2	7
Creative Writing	Required	15	24	8	26	7	27
	Elective	6	4	5	8	8	11
Speech/ Drama	Required	9	5	3	6	3	6
	Elective	6	4	5	8	8	11
Health	Required	61	62	60	62	50	59
	Elective	0	1	1	3	1	4
Journalism	Required	1	1	0	1	0	1
	Elective	2	4	1	11	3	16
Typing	Required	18	6	21	4	17	5
	Elective	2	4	5	9	11	13

■ Table 21

Length of Exploratory Courses

To examine how courses in Table 20 are offered in the middle level grades, principals indicated length of course by year, semester, quarter, etc. Table 21 shows school scheduling patterns for these courses. Subjects are reported by length of course—year long, semester, quarter, etc. The following generalizations are evident from the data in this table:

- Reading is a year long course for 96 percent of sixth graders. Reading declines as a separate subject in grades seven and eight.
- The following classes are most frequently offered for a quarter (nine week) period of time in grades six, seven, and eight: agriculture, art, career exploration, computer literacy, family and consumer education, health, technical education, and typing.
- Band is a full year course in 55 percent of sixth grades and 57 percent of seventh and eighth grades. In about one-third of the schools that offer band, it is a full year-every other day class.
- Chorus and orchestra are offered almost equally as full year-every day and full year-every other day classes in grades six, seven, and eight.
- About half of the schools with foreign language in grade six offer it as a year long course (27 percent) or as a quarter long elective (23 percent).
- Forty-five percent of schools that offer foreign language in grade seven have year long classes. Other options expressed by the data are full year-every other day (18 percent) and quarter long (21 percent).
- By grade eight, about sixty percent of the middle level schools offer foreign language as a year long class.

Subject and Grade Level	Full Year	Full Year Every Other Day	One Semester 18 Weeks	Nine Weeks	Six Weeks	Other
Agriculture						
Grade 6	0	0	20	60	0	20
Grade 7	4	10	12	63	6	4
Grade 8	4	12	18	58	5	3
Art						
Grade 6	30	20	9	30	5	7
Grade 7	17	16	18	37	6	6
Grade 8	20	16	24	31	4	5
Band						
Grade 6	55	33	1	2	0	9
Grade 7	57	37	2	1	0	3
Grade 8	57	38	2	1	0	3
Career Exploration						
Grade 6	29	4	7	20	14	27
Grade 7	30	7	5	30	17	22
Grade 8	15	7	13	31	17	17
Chorus						
Grade 6	46	43	2	2	1	6
Grade 7	45	46	4	2	0	3
Grade 8	45	46	3	3	0	3
Computer Literacy						
Grade 6	23	10	4	31	19	13
Grade 7	18	8	10	40	14	10
Grade 8	16	9	17	39	11	8

Table 21 Continued

Subject and Grade Level	Full Year	Full Year Every Other Day	One Semester 18 Weeks	Nine Weeks	Six Weeks	Other
Family & Consumer Ed.						
Grade 6	13	7	15	43	13	9
Grade 7	9	6	18	56	6	6
Grade 8	14	7	29	42	4	5
French						
Grade 6	26	11	19	26	15	4
Grade 7	48	21	7	18	4	2
Grade 8	61	18	4	15	2	1
German						
Grade 6	23	8	15	23	31	0
Grade 7	42	18	10	20	6	4
Grade 8	62	20	3	11	3	1
Spanish						
Grade 6	31	14	17	20	14	3
Grade 7	46	16	7	24	4	4
Grade 8	58	13	7	17	3	2
Other Foreign Lang.						
Grade 6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grade 7	25	0	25	25	0	25
Grade 8	60	0	7	20	7	7
General Music						
Grade 6	36	25	7	23	2	7
Grade 7	25	27	12	24	7	6
Grade 8	27	28	17	19	5	4
Health						
Grade 6	30	14	9	24	11	13
Grade 7	20	20	18	30	5	7
Grade 8	21	21	18	26	6	8
Journalism						
Grade 6	17	0	0	17	17	50
Grade 7	11	11	0	22	44	11
Grade 8	41	0	6	24	18	12
Orchestra						
Grade 6	47	40	1	0	0	12
Grade 7	49	48	2	1	0	1
Grade 8	51	42	2	2	0	3
Reading						
Grade 6	96	1	2	0	0	0
Grade 7	81	6	8	3	0	1
Grade 8	79	5	12	2	1	1
Speech/Drama						
Grade 6	14	5	10	29	33	10
Grade 7	18	0	29	29	18	6
Grade 8	11	4	38	23	19	4
Technology Ed.						
Grade 6	8	3	10	60	13	6
Grade 7	8	6	26	49	6	6
Grade 8	14	7	31	39	5	4
Typing						
Grade 6	8	8	6	27	38	12
Grade 7	7	9	16	48	13	8
Grade 8	8	28	13	34	8	8

Part 5: Student Activities

■ Table 22

Student Activity Periods

The literature on middle schools suggests that all students should be given an opportunity to become involved in a student activity program during the school day. A number of reasons are cited for the inclusion of an activity period. One suggests that activities allow students to apply knowledge and skills learned in academic classes. Another notes that activities scheduled during the school day allow all students to participate, including bus riders and those with other responsibilities after school. Also, the exploratory nature of activities is developmentally appropriate for middle level students, and they offer opportunities for decision-making and problem-solving. Table 22 displays the number and percent of schools with a co-curricular program activity period during the school day.

Twenty-six percent of the middle level schools in Wisconsin have created an activity period during the school day. As shown in Table 13, 44 percent of the schools with a teacher based guidance (advisor/advisee) program indicate that part of this program is used for clubs and activities.

Activity Period	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Yes	113	26
No	306	73

■ Table 23

Length of Activity Periods

In those schools where students have an opportunity to become involved in activities during the school day, the time allocation is generally 30 minutes or appears to correspond to the regular class period of 41 or more minutes. Table 23 indicates the number and percent of schools that reported different amounts of time for activity periods.

Minutes	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
0-15	4	2
16-20	12	8
21-25	6	4
26-30	24	17
31-35	6	4
36-40	4	2
41-45	31	22
46-Over	48	35

■ Table 24

Co-Curricular Program Activities

Table 24 presents the number and percent of schools that reported different co-curricular programs. Music activities, mathematics competencies, and cheerleading seem to be the co-curricular activities offered most often in Wisconsin middle level schools. Many schools also reported opportunities for students such as yearbook and newspaper staffs, and forensics and drama activities. The table shows a large number and variety of co-curricular opportunities offered to middle level students.

Activity	Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yearbook	84	19	172	40	211	49
Newspaper	94	22	185	43	205	48
Forensics	97	22	207	48	212	49
Music Activities	267	62	391	91	392	92
Library Club	57	13	90	21	96	22
Cheerleading	46	10	268	62	285	66
Drama	90	21	168	39	181	42
Math Activities	123	28	224	52	232	54
Naturalist Club	8	1	13	3	11	2
Chess Club	40	9	57	13	61	14
Radio Club	6	1	7	1	8	1
Computer Club	43	10	63	15	70	16
Science Club	32	7	49	11	54	12
Bridge Club	3	0	2	0	3	0
Photography Club	15	3	36	8	39	9

■ Table 25

Frequency of Activity Periods

Table 25 provides the number and percent of schools that reported different frequencies of activity period meetings. Of the 113 schools that reported a co-curricular activity period for students during the school day, slightly more than one-half indicated that this period is scheduled every day. The next highest percentage consisted of one activity period scheduled one day per week. Several schools reported having these meetings two or three times each month.

Frequency	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Every day	60	53
Four/Week	4	3
Three/Week	8	7
Two/Week	55	4
One/Week	15	13
One/Month	4	3
Two/Month	3	2
Other	14	12

■ Table 26

Intramural Programs

Intramurals are those athletic activities that generally take place during the school day. They are characterized by the involvement of all students in the activity. In the middle level grades an emphasis is placed on the cooperative, skill building nature of intramurals. Intramural opportunities in Wisconsin middle schools are limited. Table 26 presents the number and percent of schools that reported different intramural programs.

Activity	Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Football	85	19	137	32	138	30
Basketball–Girls	137	32	114	26	106	24
Basketball–Boys	144	33	119	27	109	25
Volleyball–Girls	95	22	130	30	125	29
Volleyball–Boys	60	14	78	18	77	18
Wrestling	45	10	42	9	36	8
Track–Girls	54	12	65	15	62	14
Track–Boys	54	12	65	15	62	14
Gymnastics	30	7	41	9	40	9
Swimming–Girls	17	3	16	3	15	3
Swimming–Boys	17	3	16	3	15	3
Tennis–Girls	24	5	32	7	30	7
Tennis–Boys	23	5	30	7	29	6
Soccer–Girls	41	9	48	11	44	10
Soccer–Boys	43	10	51	11	47	11
Baseball	12	2	17	3	17	3
Softball	68	15	83	19	81	19
Cross Country–Girls	23	5	37	8	37	8
Cross Country–Boys	23	5	38	8	37	8
Skiing	38	8	58	13	57	13

■ Table 27

Interscholastic Programs

Athletic programs in which students compete with students from other schools are generally referred to as interscholastic athletics. Table 27 shows the broad scope of programs available for middle level students and the corresponding numbers and percents. It appears that more emphasis is placed on interscholastic programs than intramural programs in grades seven and eight.

Activity	Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Football	17	3	144	33	178	41
Basketball–Girls	86	20	374	87	382	89
Basketball–Boys	92	21	374	87	383	89
Volleyball–Girls	40	9	241	58	259	60
Volleyball–Boys	16	3	43	10	44	10
Wrestling	59	13	272	63	278	65
Track–Girls	49	11	253	59	262	61
Track–Boys	48	11	250	58	259	60
Gymnastics	6	1	28	6	28	6
Swimming–Girls	5	1	13	3	16	3
Swimming–Boys	4	0	10	2	13	3
Tennis–Girls	0	0	15	3	17	3
Tennis–Boys	14	3	14	3	16	3
Soccer–Girls	6	1	17	3	20	4
Soccer–Boys	6	1	17	3	20	4
Baseball	10	2	21	4	24	5
Softball	23	5	58	13	66	15
Cross Country–Girls	15	3	89	20	93	21
Cross Country–Boys	15	3	91	21	94	22
Skiing	0	0	3	0	3	0

Part 6: Other Middle Level Topics

A number of programs reflect current practices in the middle level grades. These include the areas of parent involvement, communication, recognition programs, school improvement efforts, and staff development. This chapter discusses the survey results of each of these areas.

■ Table 28

Parent Involvement

Table 28 indicates various means of communicating school information to parents as well as ways in which the school seeks to involve parents. Almost all schools with middle level grades hold parent conferences. Between 81 and 89 percent of the schools provide proficiency and deficiency progress reports and newsletters. About half have a formal PTO/PTA organization. Another 41 percent involve parents in an advisory capacity through parent advisory groups or committees. Parenting classes aimed at middle level parents are a promising trend. Twenty-three percent of the schools reported this service. Other types of involvement identified by schools include open house, orientation sessions, parent support groups, parent forums, parents involved as volunteers and guest speakers, and other enrichment activities.

Types of Involvement	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Conferences	419	98
Deficiency Progress Reports	381	89
Newsletters	378	88
Proficiency Progress Reports	348	81
PTO/PTA	211	49
Parent Advisory Group	175	41
Parenting Classes	100	23
Other	81	19

■ Table 29

Providing Positive Reinforcement

Table 29 indicates the number and percent of schools with positive recognition programs. Most schools with middle level grades use academic honor rolls as a way to promote positive recognition for students. Besides the student of the week/month, birthday recognition, and behavior honor roles reported, numerous other means of recognizing students were listed. Included were "caught being good" programs, academic and achievement awards, athletic and attendance awards, award programs/assemblies, citizenship and effort awards, letters and positive notes to students and parents, and rewards such as trips and tickets to special events.

Types of Programs	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Academic Honor Roles	374	87
Birthdays	200	46
Student of the Week/Month	175	41
Behavior Honor Roles	115	26
Other	194	45

■ Table 30

Reporting Student Progress

Table 30 presents the various systems for reporting student progress in Wisconsin's middle schools. Most schools with middle level grades use letter grades, conferences, and teacher comments on the report cards to inform parents about student progress.

These patterns correspond to the responses on the national survey conducted in 1988. A promising trend in almost a third of the schools was the reporting of personal and social development. Other practices not listed on Table 30 but described by principals are phone calls, district made tests, and letters to the students' homes.

Types of Systems	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding	NMSA
Letter Scale	420	98	86
Conferences	401	94	66
Teacher Comments	388	91	
Standardized Tests	364	85	
Informal Written Notes	306	71	58
Evaluation of Attitude/Effort	295	69	
Evaluation of Personal/ Social Development	138	32	
Satisfactory-Unsatisfactory Scale	120	28	37
Word Scale	107	25	19
Percentage Marks	98	23	29
Dual System	51	11	8
Numberical Scale	27	6	13
Student Self-Evaluation	19	4	5
Others	90	21	

■ Table 31

Reporting of Exploratory Courses

For the purpose of this report, exploratories refer to subjects outside the curriculum areas of math, science, language arts, and social studies. Fourteen percent of the principals reported that their schools use a different system for reporting exploratory subjects than that used for core curriculum subjects. Table 31 provides the number and percent of schools that use such different systems and those that do not.

Response	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Yes	59	14
No	352	86

■ Table 32

Focus for School Reorganization

Table 32 displays the number and percent of schools that reported different reasons for updating or changing their organization or curriculum. A number of responses were frequently reported. Most (61 percent) seek to provide a program specifically aimed at students in this age group. This response corresponds closely with the findings of the 1988 National Middle School Association report. Other reasons eliciting a strong response reflect programs that try to build a better bridge between elementary and secondary schools, and that attempt to improve the quality of the previous school organization. It is significant to note that while 50 percent of the schools in the NMSA study said that changes were made in the middle level to eliminate crowded conditions in other schools in the district, only 20 percent of Wisconsin principals reported that reason. This seems to indicate that program changes are initiated primarily as a result of looking at what is the best programming for students of this age range.

Reasons for Updating or Changing	Number of Schools	Percent of those Responding	NMSA (1988) Percent
Provide a Program Specifically for Students in this Age Group	262	60	65
Better Bridge Between the Elementary and Secondary	245	56	51
Aid Desegragation	180	41	7
Improve the Quality of the Previous School Organization	180	41	29
Remedy Weaknesses of the Two Level Organization	136	31	17
Eliminate Crowded Conditions in Other Schools in the District	87	20	50
Provide More Specialization in Grades 5 and/or 6	58	13	16
Utilize a New Building	28	6	18
Utilize an Older Building	29	6	16

■ Table 33

Staff Development

This survey item asked principals to indicate those development activities specific to middle level education in which their staff participated during the previous five years. The intention was to determine what activities were used to provide staff with a structure for middle level program improvement. In reporting staff development opportunities, at least 80 percent of the principals said the district sponsors inservice activities and/or staff members take college/university sponsored credit coursework. Over half reported that their staff take university sponsored non-credit workshops, make visitations to other schools, and initiate building level improvement (site-based management) and committee sponsored activities. Table 33 displays the corresponding numbers and percents.

Staff Development Activities	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
District Sponsored Inservice Activities	364	85
College/University Sponsored Credit Coursework	345	80
Building Level Improvement Committee Sponsored Activities	250	58
College/University Sponsored Non-Credit Workshops	248	58
School Visitations	250	58
Middle Level Consultants	132	30

Part 7: Middle Level Programming Concerns

■ Table 34

In this section, the survey asked principals to identify middle level programs that were being considered for implementation or that had already been selected as a focus for school improvement as noted in Table 34.

The three areas most often identified are programs for gifted and talented students (39 percent), programs for at-risk students (34 percent), and advisor-advisee programs (31 percent). These were followed by student recognition programs (25 percent), interdisciplinary team organization (20 percent), and programs that help orient students to middle school (18 percent).

Between 11 and 13 percent of the principals reported a focus on student activity programs, retention policies, orientation to high school programs, youth service programs within the school and leadership structures that promote shared decision-making. The topic of youth service within the community was least frequently reported.

Other programs not listed on the survey but reported by principals include plans for AOD, student assistance programs, study skills, student services team, art festivals, plans to involve parents, content reading, cooperative learning, incorporation of thinking skills into the curriculum, minority student achievement, philosophy, and community resources.

Programming Concerns	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Gifted and Talented Programming	171	39
At-Risk Programming	148	34
Advisor/Advisee Program	134	31
Student Recognition Program	107	25
Interdisciplinary Team Organization	85	20
Orientation to Middle School	76	18
Student Activity Program	55	13
Shared Decision Making	51	12
Youth Service-Community	51	12
Youth Service-School	49	11
Orientation to High School	46	11
Retention Policy	46	11
Grade Reporting Practice	36	8
Other	29	7

Part 8: Promising Program Initiatives

■ Table 35

In this item, the survey asked principals to indicate those programs or practices within their schools that they considered exemplary.

The program most often cited, with a 17 percent response, was orientation for students entering middle school . Student recognition and programming for at-risk students followed with 15 percent. Between 10 and 14 percent reported exemplary interdisciplinary team organizations, leadership with shared decision-making, programs for the gifted and talented, and advisor/advisee programs.

Fewer than 9 percent of the schools reported student activity programs, retention policies, grade reporting practices, orientation to high school, and youth service in the school and community.

Thirteen percent of the principals identified other programs they considered exemplary which were not listed on the survey. Some of these are alcohol and drug education/prevention programs, peer helper programs, study skills, homework support system, parent support network, big buddy program, power of positive students, multicultural school improvement, adaptive grading programs, and peer mediation. Table 35 provides the corresponding numbers and percents.

A brief description of the promising programs is available in the DPI publication, *Promising Practices and Programs for the Middle Level Grades.*

Initiatives	Number of Schools	Percent of Those Responding
Orientation to Middle School	72	17
Student Recognition Program	67	15
At-Risk Programming	63	15
Interdisciplinary Team Organization	58	13
Shared Decision-Making	49	11
Gifted and Talented Programming	48	11
Advisor/Advisee Program	43	10
Student Activity Program	35	8
Retention Policy	30	7
Grade Reporting Practice	29	7
Youth Service-Community	26	6
Orientation to High School	24	6
Youth Service-School	12	3
Other	58	13

Chapter 3
Principles and Characteristics of the Ideal Middle Level School

In June, 1989, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* presented a challenge to middle level educators. The report, prepared by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Education of the Young Adolescent, identified eight essential principles for transforming middle grade schools. By addressing these principles, schools move toward meeting the critical educational, health, and social needs of young adolescents.

Identifying the ideal middle level school provides a starting point in determining where one is and where one needs to go to improve educational programs for the young adolescent. The eight principles in *Turning Points* provide the foundation for this ideal middle level school. Each principle is followed by characteristics identified in current middle level literature that exemplify qualities, programs, or practices in the ideal middle school.

Principle 1

School should be a place where close, trusting relationships with adults and peers create a climate for personal growth and intellectual development.

- Middle school teachers attend to the affective or emotional needs of a student's development.
- The use of an advisement program or homeroom base provides a structure in which teachers can support their "family" of students.
- The guidance program is preventive and supportive to the changing needs of the student.
- While guidance services must be offered and coordinated by licensed counseling professionals, all teachers in the middle level grades assume responsibility and take an active role in assisting students with their development.
- The school organization reflects the transitional nature of the students as they move from the self-contained elementary classroom to the departmentalized high school.
- Through interdisciplinary teams, houses, or block scheduling, teachers share responsibility for the core instructional program.
- Coordinated instruction results in students having the opportunity to frequently participate in interdisciplinary units or themes.

Principle 2

Every student in the middle grades should learn to think critically through mastery of an appropriate body of knowledge, lead a healthy life, behave ethically and lawfully, and assume the responsibilities of citizenship in a pluralistic society.

- The curriculum provides a balance of knowledge, skills, and activities to help middle level students understand and cope with their expanding world.
- Instruction takes place daily in the core areas of mathematics, science, social studies, language arts, and reading.
- Physical education is offered frequently during the week and year so that students improve their level of health and fitness.
- Opportunities are available for students to explore such topics as art, music, foreign language and cultures, technology education, family and consumer education, computers, career exploration, and business.

- The curriculum is correlated between courses and is relevant to the experiences of the young adolescent.
- Curriculum basics include the development of critical thinking skills, problem solving strategies, and the ability to work cooperatively, gather, process and apply information.
- The "hidden curriculum" of the school those attitudes, actions, and behaviors transmitted by all of the adults in the school, is consistent with the school's philosophy and goals.

Principle 3

All young adolescents should have the opportunity to succeed in every aspect of the middle grade program, regardless of previous achievement or the pace at which they learn.

- Because of the wide variations in the development of young adolescents, teachers carefully and continuously assess individual learning styles and progress.
- The independent seatwork and group activities of students are closely monitored.
- Instruction is altered as needed to accommodate the needs of individual students, including remediation as well as enrichment or acceleration.
- Teachers have expectations that all students can learn.
- Success for all students is insured through the elimination of tracking by achievement level, promotion of cooperative learning experiences, flexibility in arranging instructional time, and grouping and regrouping to meet the varying needs of students.
- The school provides adequate resources of time, space, equipment, and materials for a variety of instructional strategies to be implemented.
- The school recognizes a wide spectrum of student achievements. These include academic achievement, student involvement in activities, individual and group efforts at improvement, and school and community service.
- The competitive aspects of student achievements are down-played in an effort to recognize each individual as important.
- School facilities are safe, clean, and comfortable.
- Students participate in keeping the school attractive.
- Students are encouraged to participate in decisions that affect them.

Principle 4

Decisions concerning the experiences of middle grade students should be made by the adults who know them best.

- The administration empowers staff to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students through greater teacher control of the instructional program and a greater responsibility for student performance.
- Teachers use the results of student evaluation for instructional and curriculum planning. They use a variety of methods to assess student learning including process, product, test, and behavioral observations.
- The staff evaluates programs through surveys, questionnaires, parent information, and school data such as attendance information, the findings of outside evaluators, student referrals to the office, lunch and playground behavior, etc. The staff uses this information to evaluate programs and plan cooperatively for ongoing improvement that reflects the school's philosophy and goals.
- Both classroom and school evaluation processes are comprehensive and balanced.
- The staff provides for the individual needs of students and special populations with regular meetings.

Principle 5

Teachers in middle grade schools should be selected and specially educated to teach young adolescents.

- Young adolescents have diverse learning needs that result from their unique patterns of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development. To reach and teach these students, teachers demonstrate a knowledge of instructional strategies and the ability to use these strategies effectively.
- Small and large group instruction, flexible grouping and regrouping, remediation and enrichment are tools included in every middle level teacher's repertoire of skills.
- Staff development programs are tied to implementing the school's philosophy and goals.
- Teachers are provided with opportunities to improve their teaching abilities, expand instructional strategies, and observe/work cooperatively with other staff.
- Middle level teacher education programs provide instruction about the characteristics of middle level students, and the importance and techniques of integrating curriculum disciplines.

Principle 6

Young adolescents must be healthy in order to learn.

- Through a variety of programs and activities, the school promotes the social, physical, and emotional health of all students at the expense of none. These programs, curricular and co-curricular, academic and/or athletic in nature, provide opportunities for students to explore, to achieve a measure of success, and to develop leadership skills.
- The young adolescent is able to practice and apply knowledge and skills learned in other classes that promote a healthy life style.
- Nursing and health services are available to students.

Principle 7

Families and middle grade schools must be allied through trust and respect if young adolescents are to succeed in school.

- Parents are encouraged to be active partners with the schools and learn about the school's programs, including the curriculum.
- Information about the needs and characteristics of middle level students is provided to parents.
- Parents feel welcome in the school and are invited to participate on advisory committees or other kinds of parent organizations such as PTA/PTOs.

Principle 8

Schools and community organizations should share responsibility for each middle grade student's success.

- Communities are connected to the school through youth service opportunities, partnerships and collaborations.
- The school ensures student access to health and social services.
- The community augments resources for teachers and students.
- Career information is available for students.

As noted by Gomoll and Burke in *School Improvement: A Resource and Planning Guide*, instructionally effective schools tend to have a clearly defined mission. In this way the attention of the staff is focused specifically on the central needs of the school. Merenbloom, in *Developing Effective Middle Schools*, further states that philosophy and goals should be developed by the staff to reflect the overall direction of the school's program. Added to the eight principles in *Turning Points* is then the ninth principle, the school's mission statement. The school's philosophy and goals provide the foundation upon which to base all decisions concerning educational programming for the young adolescent.

Principle 9

The mission statement (philosophy and goals) of the school reflects the needs and characteristics of young adolescents as well as a commitment to meet those needs.

- Curriculum, school organization, learning environment, role of the classroom teacher, and all aspects of the school program are based on the mission for the middle level grades.
- The mission statement reflects the physical, social, emotional, intellectual, cultural, aesthetic, and moral needs of students (see Appendix C for a sample list of characteristics).
- The faculty and community form a consensus on program expectations for middle level students based on the mission statement and school objectives.
- All decisions regarding programs and practices occur in the framework of what is in the best interest of students.
- Administration, staff, parents, and students understand the purpose for their school programs.

Just as all decisions about a school's program should take place in the context of the school's mission and objectives, no individual principle of the ideal middle level school exists in isolation of any other principle. As a school is an entity, each principle affects and is affected by all other parts of that entity or system.

> The time has come to examine the middle school as it is, to view it as an entity, to be sensitive to what it really teaches and what it really doesn't teach, and to understand the importance of having a single, universally understood mission that is evident in every component of the school's program.
>
> John Lounsbury

In the ideal middle school, each of the principles operates in harmony with the others to support the school's mission.

Chapter 4
Implemention Strategies: Where We Need To Be

The survey results reveal a number of program improvement activities planned or in place to benefit students in the middle level grades. Districts are initiating and improving programs specifically aimed at meeting the needs of the young adolescent in the middle level grades.

However, in comparing the survey data from the educational programs and practices in middle level grades with the "Ideal Middle Level School," discrepancies occur. To improve the educational experience for young adolescents, the discrepancies between the real and ideal need to be addressed.

The following list of principles (the first eight are adapted from *Turning Points*) summarize the ideal situation in the middle level grades. The recommendations which follow the list of principles are offered as a means to achieve the ideal.

1. The school should create a community for learning.
2. A core of common knowledge should be taught.
3. Success should be ensured for all students.
4. Teachers and administrators should be empowered.
5. Teachers should be prepared for the middle grades.
6. Academic performance should improve through better health and fitness.
7. Families should be re-engaged in the education of young adolescents.
8. Schools should be connected with communities.
9. The mission of the school should guide decisions.

Strategies

1. Most schools in Wisconsin with middle level grades do not have an interdisciplinary focus. To tie learning together for students and make learning relevant to the lives of young adolescents, schools should evaluate the effectiveness of their organizational structure. The highly departmentalized structure of the high school and the self-contained nature of elementary schools do not address the needs of middle level students. Middle level students are best served when their teachers are able to meet on a regular basis to coordinate their instructional efforts. Administrators must examine the school organization and look for ways in which the schedule can be manipulated to provide time for staff to meet, plan, and evaluate instructional programs, and discuss student needs.
   (Principles 1,3,4)

2. Teachers need continuing staff development to effectively instruct young adolescents.
   - One area for staff development lies in increasing the teacher's awareness of the characteristics and developmental needs of young adolescents. This knowledge provides the foundation for all instructional programming for the middle level student.
   - Teachers need staff development to increase their ability to implement a variety of teaching strategies. To address the needs of diverse young adolescents and to replace the often harmful and ineffective practice of tracking, teachers need to be confident that they can plan and in-

struct students using a combination of strategies such as cooperative learning, inquiry, role-playing, and computer-aided instruction. Skills for flexible grouping and regrouping of students as they learn at different rates or show interest in different topics of study should be tools every middle level teacher can use. In addition, teachers need to plan opportunities for enrichment, remediation or acceleration, and integrate higher level thinking skills into the regular curriculum. How to evaluate student progress in authentic ways (other than sole reliance on objective or standardized tests) is a continuing challenge for teachers and an important area of consideration in examining the effectiveness of teaching strategies.

- Staff development is necessary to assist teachers in improving skills to be supportive advisors to students. Not all middle level teachers are comfortable dealing with issues that concern the lives of their students. Reflective listening and other communication skills can increase their effectiveness as student advisors.
- Staff development refers not only to inservice or preservice opportunities, but also to the time necessary for staff to become involved in decisions that affect their students. It should not be assumed that the staff has the prerequisite skills to be involved in group problem-solving or consensus, especially if shared decision-making is a new practice in the school. Sufficient time is essential for staff to have the opportunity to experiment, risk failure, and learn from mistakes.
- Many teachers are hesitant to leave the security and 'comfort' of their own classrooms. The encouragement and support of administrators is crucial for the personal growth of some teachers and for their involvement in the mainstream of the school.

(Principles 1,2,3,4,5)

3. Student activity programs during the school day provide important opportunities for all students. In appropriately planned and implemented programs, students are able to integrate knowledge learned in classes with skills and behaviors required in cooperative efforts. These opportunities include leadership, security, exploration, and achievement. Attitudes and skills developed outside the classroom can be a positive motivating force for classroom activities. By scheduling student activities during the school day, all students are provided with an opportunity to participate.
   (Principles 2,6)

4. Promoting parent and community involvement in the school will strengthen the bond between home and school and improve students' likelihood of success. Schools should explore a variety of ways to communicate with parents. Monthly newsletters, curriculum calendars, positive progress reports or phone calls, and brief notes. are all means some middle level schools have effectively used to keep parents aware and involved in the child's day. Other schools offer parenting classes, advisory groups, open houses, and forums. By providing this important information, parents can be helped to make adjustments for their children as they move through early adolescence.
   (Principle 7)

5. The Carnegie Council Task Force notes five ways that communities can work with middle grade schools. Any of the following offers a means for schools to make connections with the community.
   - Place students in a variety of youth service programs in the community.
   - Ensure student access to health and social service agencies.
   - Support the middle grade education program through youth groups, church and community programs and facilities, alternative education programs, and civic groups.
   - Provide resources for teachers and students.
   - Expand career guidance for students.

   (Principle 8)

6. To focus an educational program on the needs and characteristics of the young adolescent, the school must have a coherent mission (philosophy and goals). The process of change can veer in unintended directions if the school mission is not guiding decisions that affect the instructional program. This important document should be developed with the input of staff and parents and shared with the students and community. All should understand the programs and practices of the school.
(Principle 9)

Significant changes are occurring in Wisconsin's middle level grades. What sometimes appears to be lacking, however, is a focused or integrated approach to change. Haphazard planning, implementation, and evaluation can subvert the contribution of a promising practice or program. Designing an effective school improvement program is a necessary first step.

School Improvement: A Resource and Planning Guide and *Promising Practices and Programs in Wisconsin's Middle Level Grades* are two reference tools available from the Department of Public Instruction. A number of national and state organizations, including the National Middle School Association, the Association For Supervision And Curriculum Development, the national associations for elementary and secondary principals, and the Center for the Young Adolescent at Platteville, Wisconsin offer a number of resources for improving middle level programs.

The efforts and accomplishments of each school is an important link in improving educational opportunities for all of Wisconsin's middle level learners.

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Appendix B
Survey to Assess the Status of Middle Level Grades in Wisconsin's Public Schools

October 1989

General Information

1. Name _____ 2. Title _____

3. School _____

4. School Address _____

5. City _____ 6. ZIP _____

7. Enrollment as of September 25, 1989

_____ A. 1 - 150 _____ E. 601 - 750

_____ B. 151 - 300 _____ F. 751 - 900

_____ C. 301 - 450 _____ G. 901-1050

_____ D. 451 - 600 _____ H. Over 1050

8. Please indicate by a check those grades included in your school.

_____ A. 5 - 8 _____ B. 6 - 8 _____ C. 7 - 8 _____ D. 7 - 9

_____ E. Other (Please specify) _____

Administrative Organization

9. Please indicate the number of instructional periods per day in your school schedule. Do not include lunch as an instructional period.

_____ A. 6 _____ E. We use a block of time scheduling rather than

_____ B. 7 specified class periods.

_____ C. 8 _____ F. Other (Please specify) _____

10. Please indicate the length of your instructional periods.

_____ A. 30 - 34 minutes
_____ B. 35 - 39 minutes
_____ C. 40 - 44 minutes
_____ D. 45 - 49 minutes
_____ E. 50 - 54 minutes
_____ F. More than 54 minutes

11. An interdisciplinary organization is defined as two or more teachers working with the same group of students utilizing a block scheduled period of time. Does your school utilize an interdisciplinary organization?

_____ A. Yes
_____ B. No

If your answer to number 11 is yes, please complete questions 12-15.

12. The following subjects are included on the interdisciplinary teams:

_____ A. Language Arts
_____ B. Science
_____ C. Reading
_____ D. Mathematics
_____ E. Social Studies
_____ F. Other (Please specify) _____

13. Do the teachers involved on the interdisciplinary teams have a common team planning period in addition to an individual planning period? Please exclude time before the first period and after the last period.

_____ A. Yes
_____ B. No

14. If your response to question 13 was yes, please indicate the amount of time designated as "team planning time."

_____ Number of minutes

15. Are the interdisciplinary team leaders compensated for their work as team leaders?

_____ A. Yes _____ B. No _____ C. Does not apply to our situation

16. What middle school decision-making groups meet regularly during the school year? Check as many as applicable.

_____ A. Faculty council/cabinet
_____ B. School Improvement Effectiveness Teams
_____ C. Departmental Staff
_____ D. Grade Level Staff
_____ E. Team/house staff
_____ F. Other (Please specify) _____

Student Activity Programs

17. Does your school have an activity period allowing all students an opportunity to become involved in the co-curricular program during the school day?

_____ A. Yes _____ B. No

18. The time allocated to the activity period is _____ Number of Minutes

19. How often does the activity period meet?

_____ A. Every day
_____ B. Four times a week
_____ C. Three times a week
_____ D. Two times a week
_____ E. Once a week
_____ F. Two times a month
_____ G. Once a month
_____ H. Other (Please specify) _____

Guidance Program

20. Do you have a teacher-based guidance program (home-base, advisor-advisee, teacher-advisee)?

_____ A. Yes _____ B. No

If your answer to question 20 is yes, then please respond to the next four questions.

21. Which staff members other than regular classroom teachers function as advisors?

_____ A. Administrators
_____ B. Media specialists
_____ C. Resource teachers (special education teachers, gifted/talented teachers)
_____ D. Counselors
_____ E. Team/house staff
_____ F. Others (Please specify) _____

22. How often do the advisory groups meet?

_____ A. Every day
_____ B. Four times a week
_____ C. Three times a week
_____ D. Two times a week
_____ E. Once a week
_____ F. Two times a month
_____ G. Once a month
_____ H. Other (Please specify) _____

23. How many minutes per session do the advisory groups meet? _____ Number of Minutes

24. Please indicate by as many checks as applicable the kinds of activities that are included in the advisory groups.

_____ A. Silent sustained reading

_____ B. Orientation activities to the middle school

_____ C. Intramurals

_____ D. Career information

_____ E. Orientation activities to the senior high school

_____ F. Personal growth concerns

_____ G. Student clubs and activities (student council, computer club, etc.)

_____ E. Others (Please specify) _____

_____

School Reorganization

25. Many school districts have reorganized their middle level schools or have made a number of changes in the curriculum and/or organization. Please indicate by as many checks as appropriate the reasons for this reorganization or updating of the curriculum.

_____ A. To remedy the weaknesses of the two level organization (elementary/high school)

_____ B. To provide more specialization in grades 5 and/or 6

_____ C. To better bridge the elementary and the high school

_____ D. To improve the quality of the previous school organization

_____ E. To aid desegregation

_____ F. To eliminate crowded conditions in other schools in the district

_____ G. To provide a program specifically designed for students in this age group

_____ H. To utilize a new building

_____ I. To utilize an older building when a new senior high school was built

Staff Development

26. Please indicate by as many checks as applicable the staff development activities specific to middle level education in which your staff participated the past five years.

_____ A. College/University sponsored credit coursework

_____ B. College/University sponsored non-credit workshops

_____ C. District sponsored inservice activities

_____ D. School visitations

_____ E. Building level improvement committee sponsored activities

_____ F. Middle level consultant

Curriculum

27. Place an "R" to indicate a required course or an "E" to indicate an elective course in the first column. Also, please indicate the length of time each course is offered with a check in the appropriate column.

Grade Six

Courses	Required/ Elective	Full Year	Eighteen Weeks		Nine Weeks	Six Weeks	Other
			One Semester	Every Other Day Full Year			
Language Arts							
Mathematics							
Science							
Social Studies							
Agriculture							
Art							
Band							
Career Exploration							
Chorus							
Computer Literacy							
Creative Writing							
FAM/Consumer Education							

Foreign Language							
French							
German							
Spanish							
Other							
General Music							
Health							
Journalism							
Orchestra							
Reading							
Speech/Drama							
Technology Ed.							
Typing/ Keyboarding							

28. Place an "R" to indicate a required course or an "E" to indicate an elective course in the first column. Also, please indicate the length of time each course is offered with a check in the appropriate column.

Grade Seven

Courses	Required/ Elective	Full Year	Eighteen Weeks		Nine Weeks	Six Weeks	Other
			One Semester	Every Other Day Full Year			
Language Arts							
Mathematics							
Science							
Social Studies							
Agriculture							
Art							
Band							
Career Exploration							
Chorus							
Computer Literacy							
Creative Writing							
FAM/Consumer Education							

Foreign Language							
French							
German							
Spanish							
Other							
General Music							
Health							
Journalism							
Orchestra							
Reading							
Speech/Drama							
Technology Ed.							
Typing/ Keyboarding							

29. Place an "R" to indicate a required course or an "E" to indicate an elective course in the first column. Also, please indicate the length of time each course is offered with a check in the appropriate column.

Grade Eight

Courses	Required/ Elective	Full Year	Eighteen Weeks		Nine Weeks	Six Weeks	Other
			One Semester	Every Other Day Full Year			
Language Arts							
Mathematics							
Science							
Social Studies							
Agriculture							
Art							
Band							
Career Exploration							
Chorus							
Computer Literacy							
Creative Writing							
FAM/Consumer Education							

Foreign Language							
French							
German							
Spanish							
Other							
General Music							
Health							
Journalism							
Orchestra							
Reading							
Speech/Drama							
Technology Ed.							
Typing/ Keyboarding							

Instructional Strategies

30. Please indicate if the following instructional strategies are utilized in grades six through eight in your school.

Strategy	To a Significant Degree	To Some Degree	To a Small Degree	Not at All
A. Cooperative learning				
B. Inquiry teaching				
C. Role playing/simulation				
D. Enrichment activities				
E. Integration of subject matter				
F. Computer aided instruction				

31. If you checked computer aided instruction above, please indicate the type of computer aided instruction used in your school. Check as many as applicable.

_____ A. Word processing

_____ B. Simulation games

_____ C. Recreational games

_____ D. Database file management

_____ E. Spreadsheets

32. Which one of the statements below best describes your school's operating policy toward ability grouping (homogeneous vs. heterogeneous) of students for instruction?

_____ A. Ability grouping is not used in our school in any subject areas.

_____ B. Ability grouping is used in our school to a limited extent.

_____ C. Ability grouping is used in our school to a significant extent.

If your answer to number 32 above is "B" or "C", then please respond to question 33.

33. Ability grouping is often used to provide remediation or to provide enrichment. Please complete the following chart by indicating with a check those subject areas where ability grouping is used for either remediation or enrichment.

Subject	Grade Six		Grade Seven		Grade Eight	
	Remediation	Enrichment	Remediation	Enrichment	Remediation	Enrichment
Mathematics						
Science						
Social Studies						
Language Arts						
Reading						

Evaluation

34. Please indicate by as many checks as applicable the system(s) your school uses for reporting pupil progress.

_____ A. Letter scale (A to E, etc.)

_____ B. Word scale (Excellent, good, etc.)

_____ C. Numerical scale (1-5, etc.)

_____ D. Satisfactory-unsatisfactory scale (S, U; E, S, U; Pass-fail, etc.)

_____ E. Informal written notes

_____ F. Percentage marks (92, 88, etc.)

_____ G. Dual system [Progress compared (1) with the class and (2) with student's own potential]

_____ H. Student self-evaluation

_____ I. Teacher comments on the report card

_____ J. Evaluation of attitude/effort

_____ K. Evaluation of personal/social development

_____ L. Conferences

_____ M. Standardized tests

_____ N. Other (Please specify) _____

35. Please indicate if pupil progress in the exploratory courses in your school is reported differently than courses such as mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies.

_____ A. Yes _____ B. No

Co-Curricular Programs

36. Please indicate by as many checks as applicable in which grades each of the following program/activities are offered.

School Activity	Grades		
	Six	Seven	Eight
Yearbook			
Newspaper			
Forensics			
Music Activities			
Library Club			
Cheerleading			
Drama			
Math Activities			
Naturalist Club			
Chess Club			
Radio Club			
Computer Club			
Science Club			
Bridge Club			
Photography Club			

37. Please indicate by as many checks as applicable in what grades each of the following programs/activities are offered. Intramural is defined as an activity that involves students only from within the school; interscholastic is an activity that involves students from other schools.

Activity	Intramural			Interscholastic		
	Six	Seven	Eight	Six	Seven	Eight
Football						
Basketball-Girls						
Basketball-Boys						
Volleyball-Girls						
Volleyball-Boys						
Wrestling						
Track-Girls						
Track-Boys						
Gymnastics						
Swimming-Girls						
Swimming-Boys						
Tennis-Girls						
Tennis-Boys						
Soccer-Girls						
Soccer-Boys						
Baseball						
Softball						
Cross Country-Girls						
Cross Country-Boys						
Skiing						

Meeting Individual Needs

39. Please indicate by as many checks as appropriate the manner in which your school is meeting the needs of the gifted and talented students?

_____ A. Resource teachers

_____ B. Tracking (ability grouping)

_____ C. Enrichment within the classroom

_____ D. Pull-out program

_____ E. Accelerate grades

_____ F. Accelerate classes

_____ G. Compacting curriculum

_____ H. Mini-courses

_____ I. Mentoring

_____ J. Independent study

_____ K. Tutor others

_____ L. Other (Please specify) _____

40. Please indicate by as many checks as appropriate the manner in which your school is meeting the needs of the at-risk students?

_____ A. Resource teachers
_____ B. Curriculum modification
_____ C. Pull-out program
_____ D. Being tutored
_____ E. Mini-courses
_____ F. Remedial courses
_____ G. Special education programs
_____ H. Referral to other agencies
_____ I. Alternate course requirements
_____ J. Reduced assignments
_____ K. Reduced requirements
_____ L. Small group meetings
_____ M. Other (Please specify) _____

Student Recognition Programs

41. Please indicate by as many checks as appropriate the types of recognition of students in your school.

_____ A. Academic honor roles
_____ B. Behavior honor roles
_____ C. Student of the week/month
_____ D. Birthdays
_____ E. Others (Please specify) _____

_____

Parent Involvement

42. Please indicate by as many checks as appropriate the types of involvement with parents of students in your school.

_____ A. PTA/PTO
_____ B. Newsletters
_____ C. Conferences
_____ D. Proficiency progress reports
_____ E. Deficiency progress reports
_____ F. Parenting classes
_____ G. Parent advisory group
_____ H. Other (Please specify) _____

Many school districts are interested in learning of exemplary middle level practices and programs in other schools. If you believe you have an ***exemplary*** *program in your school and are willing to have other schools contact you in order to visit your school or call you for further information, please complete the following question.*

43. Please indicate by as many checks as appropriate those programs or practices within your school that you would deem as **exemplary**.

_____ A. Interdisciplinary team organization

_____ B. Advisor/advisee program

_____ C. Student recognition program

_____ D. Program for at-risk students

_____ E. Program for gifted and talented students

_____ F. Student activity program

_____ G. Retention policy

_____ H. Grade reporting practice

_____ I. Orientation to the middle school

_____ J. Orientation to the senior high school

_____ K. Youth service within the school

_____ L. Youth service within the community

_____ M. Leadership structure with shared decision-making

_____ N. Others (Please specify) _____

_____

44. Many middle level schools are in the process of developing new programs. Please check those middle level programs you are considering for implementation in your school or that you have selected for school improvement.

_____ A. Interdisciplinary team organization

_____ B. Advisor/advisee program

_____ C. Student recognition program

_____ D. Program for at-risk students

_____ E. Program for gifted and talented students

_____ F. Student activity program

_____ G. Retention policy

_____ H. Grade reporting practice

_____ I. Orientation to the middle school

_____ J. Orientation to the senior high school

_____ K. Youth service within the school

_____ L. Youth service within the community

_____ M. Leadership structure with shared decision-making

_____ N. Others (Please specify) _____

_____

Appendix C
Characteristics of Middle Grade Students

Physical

Growth Patterns. Although all humans go through a growth pattern, there is a significant unevenness in the growth between individuals as well as unevenness of growth within an individual. Between individuals, these differences may be reason for comparison and may cause embarrassment over what seems to be a lack of development or what seems to be overdevelopment. Awkwardness may result because the proper coordination between all parts of the body has not yet developed. Both boys and girls experience a growth spurt, in which there is an increase in the length of the bones along with a replacement of fat with muscle tissue. Bones may become irritated when exposed to pressure. Also, the growth of muscle tissue can be painful.

Aggressiveness. The physiological changes that middle grade students undergo often cause restlessness. This in turn gives way to aggressive play as a reaction to these changes and as a means of reducing stress. This aggressive play may also be a means for early adolescents to establish their own personal identities.

Hormonal Changes. In both boys and girls, there is an accelerated growth spurt. The accompanying hormonal changes result in periods of high energy and low energy which are marked by periods of intense activity as well as periods of reduced activity. With the growth spurt also comes an increased desire for more food, often at times other than the usual meal time. Fatigue and an increased need for sleep may be the norm for many early adolescents.

Primary Sexual Characteristics. The years from 10 to 12 are important for girls because approximately two-thirds will experience their first menstruation and thus become capable of producing eggs for fertilization. This event signals the end of childhood and the advent of adulthood. For boys, the signal is not as strong. Enlargement of the genitalia along with nocturnal emissions are indications of the presence of sperm. These primary changes in boys accompany other facets of growth which takes place about 12 to 18 months later than the corresponding changes for girls.

Secondary Sexual Characteristics. Secondary sexual characteristics for girls include breast development, increase in hip size, the appearance of facial and body hair, along with a change in the texture of the skin–often with a temporary malfunctioning of the oil-producing glands which results in acne. At the same time, girls gain height and weight. For boys, the change in skin texture and the appearance of body hair is the same as for girls. In addition, there is a broadening of the shoulders and a replacement of fat with muscle tissue. Throughout early adolescence, girls are usually taller than boys of the same age.

Emotional

Mood Changes. Frequent changes in the moods of middle grade youngsters commonly occur. One minute they can be up and the next minute they can be down. Quite possibly early adolescents can also lose control of these emotions, making them appear boisterous and distracted from the task at hand. They may frequently fluctuate between child-like and adult-like behavior. Regardless of what we as adults believe, it is possible that these early adolescents cannot control their emotional behavior to the degree adults expect. Changes in moods and changes in behavior are directly related to changes in body hormones.

Concern With Oneself. Early adolescents see themselves as how they perceive others seeing them, not necessarily as they really are. They tend to view the world as it revolves around them. They may express concern that when people look into a crowd, the people really are looking specifically at them. As they mature, they begin to view their existence as part of the world rather than the center of the world.

Emotional Dependence. Early adolescents often reject genuine gestures of friendship or affection from adults, especially when such gestures may be made in front of peers. This, however, does not mean they do not desire attention from adults. Verbal responses seem to be more acceptable forms of affection to the early adolescent. There appears to be a shift of emotional dependence from adults to peers as the early adolescent searches for independence. Through further maturation, the early adolescent moves from emotional dependence on others to emotional interdependence.

Idealism. Middle graders tend to be very idealistic in their views of people and rules. They will expect others, especially adults, to be perfect, and can be very critical of those who do not meet their high expectations. The adult who once was idolized may no longer be seen as perfect. Early adolescents may appear to be angry because life is no longer as perfect as they once pictured it to be. In time, the early adolescent comes to a point of accepting that all human beings have faults and therefore become more accepting of others.

Self-Confidence. Early adolescents tend to harbor feelings of inferiority and a lack of self-confidence. They have such great fear of failing in front of others that they may underestimate their abilities or talents. It may be common for some early adolescents to refrain from taking part in some activities. For this reason, they would rather watch friends play ball than be embarrassed in front of those same friends through any perceived inadequacies.

Social

Peer Culture. Early adolescents begin to see their peers and their lifestyles in a more important role. The family is no longer the center of their existence. Peer acceptance becomes paramount, and those peers establish the criteria for social acceptance or rejection. Their patterns of speech, actions, code of ethics, dress, and motivations set the standards. Girls' relationships are more emotion-laden and often involve "secret sharing." Boys form more cliques or gangs and are less likely to form intimate relationships. Early adolescents can often find diametric opposition to earlier established values accepted in childhood.

Response to Sex. The physical changes occurring in the early adolescent causes a focus or awareness of the body that may create embarrassment. Social pressures focusing on sex through television, radio, popular music, and clothing can cause the early adolescent to feel uncomfortable. Laughs and giggles or obnoxious statements seem to cover the insecurity. Because of strong peer pressure, morality becomes based on the cultural absorption rather than personal rumination.

Romantic involvement, however, tends to have less to do with sex and more on letting the early adolescent "try on" new behaviors and obtain feedback about how these new behaviors "fit."

Social Skills. As early adolescents emerge from childhood, they must leave accepted childhood behavior and develop the adult roles of social graces. During this transition period, early adolescents are given conflicting messages by adults as to what their new role should be or how to acquire the skills for this nebulous role. Peers establish criteria for the social acceptance and social rejection. A primary social goal for the adolescent is to learn skills which achieve recognition and esteem from peers, a limited circle, and to master the rules of social survival.

Seeking Independence. A major characteristic of the early adolescent seeking independence is a sense of rebelliousness, which can be mildly exhibited or overtly demonstrated. At this time they are more likely to have conflicts with parents than when they mature. Obstinate behavior is actually a positive part of maturation because it is a sign of children wanting to be accepted as individuals in their own right. Early adolescents will argue for the sake of arguing when often they simply mean to clarify their own thoughts.

Self-Identity. Peer groups tend to become the primary arena for adolescents to "test out" their identities. Self-concept emerges through peer responses and through self-perception of those responses. Self-esteem develops both positively and negatively at this developmental stage. Early adolescents are looking for a conscious sense of uniqueness as they unconsciously strive for acceptance through group ideals. Friendships change often as early adolescents seek identity through others. Some experience "identity foreclosure," that is, accepting established roles of behavior such as "the book worm" or "the prom queen." That image often remains throughout adolescence and into early adulthood. Others go through "negative identity," defining themselves totally in terms of what their parents are not and what their parents least value . Early adolescents talk a great deal about hypocrisy but show only an impoverished understanding of it; they rarely see any traces of hypocrisy in themselves.

Personal Destiny. Boys and girls begin to ask, "Who am I?" and "Where am I going?" Early adolescents begin to view themselves as active contributors to what happens to them in life. No longer are parents, society, and the "unknown" sole determiners of their destiny. They are more aware of established role patterns set by adults and question how they will fit into society. The early adolescents begin to relate what they perceive as their capabilities to future occupational possibilities. No longer is the dream of being a firefighter or medical professional based solely on superficial glamour. The idea of being part of society and developing a sense of contributing to that society overtakes the ego-centered point of view.

Intellectual

Intellectual Maturation. During this time students begin to develop skills of reflecting, hypothesizing, and organizing. They are able to deal with abstractions not requiring previous experiences. These students can mentally explore similarities and differences. An important point to remember is that students will sometimes function at a higher level than at other times. They are still more self-oriented, however, and are just beginning to see a larger scope of relationships.

Vocational and Career Choices. With their new found ability to hypothesize, early adolescents now begin to wonder about their future. A time and space perspective develops and they begin to realize they are active participants in their future growth. They begin to relate their own capabilities with career descriptions. Daydreams and fantasies play important roles.

Brain Growth. Recent research has suggested that during the approximate ages of 12-14, the growth of brain cells increases at a very slow rate as opposed to the two years immediately before and two years after this age period. Because of this, it may be difficult for students to absorb huge quantities of new knowledge. Rather, it is a time to reinforce those skills acquired during the preceding years.

Short Attention Span. Studies suggest that the attention span of middle grade students does not exceed 7 to 12 minutes. This has significant ramifications for the type and variation of instruction given to students. It is also important to distinguish this characteristic from misbehavior.

Conscience Development. According to Piaget, up to the age of 11, students will only consider one viewpoint of a moral situation and are very rigid and literal in interpreting rules and regulations. Beyond this age, students begin to take into account extenuating circumstances, motives and intentions, and become more flexible in the interpretation of rules. They develop intense feelings of fairness and are just beginning to see things in terms other than either good or bad.

Appendix D
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Appendix E
Glossary

ability grouping: the practice of dividing students into class-size groups based on a measure of the students' perceived ability or prior achievement.

activity period: a time during the regular school day in which students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of experiences that extend and reinforce the classroom curriculum. Some schools use this time for advisor-advisee programs, intramurals, community based activities, elective choices for students and similar programs.

advisor-advisee program: regularly scheduled times during which each student has the opportunity to interact with peers and staff about school-oriented and personal concerns. Staff members become involved in general advising with students at the classroom level and recommend students with special needs to the guidance staff and/or parents for follow-up.

block schedule: scheduling that provides large blocks of time in which individual teachers or teams of teachers can organize and arrange flexible groupings of students for varied periods of time. This allows teachers to plan for specific instructional needs without disrupting the schedule of the entire school. For example, this could allow a qualified teacher to teach English and social studies to a single class of students for the equivalent of two class periods. This could decrease the number of students the teacher sees daily and could double the time the teacher spends with each student.

common planning time: regularly scheduled time during the school day when staff members who teach the same students meet for joint planning, parent conferences, or materials preparation. Teachers are able to plan a more comprehensive educational program which better integrates subject areas, skills, and individual needs.

differentiated curriculum: an approach to classroom instruction which allows the learning characteristics of students to be better matched with learning opportunities provided through the curriculum. Modification of content, process, and product for remediation of students who need additional experiences to master concepts, as well as enrichment and acceleration for those who have mastered the basics and need to be challenged, are aspects of a differentiated curriculum within the classroom.

exploration: short term curriculum experiences designed to help youngsters investigate their changing needs, aptitudes, and interests. These include experiences in core curriculum, special interest areas which may be part of the core curriculum, and purely interest-centered experiences.

heterogeneous grouping: a grouping strategy which does not divide learners into groups based on their ability, learning achievement, or physical characteristics. It is used in programs in which students can learn from others even though they have wide ranges of ability and achievement.

homogeneous grouping: a grouping strategy which usually devides students into groups organized around specific levels of ability, and/or achievement. It is used in programs in which having students with common backgrounds can increase student learning, such as special education, gifted and talented education, and competitive performing groups.

interdisciplinary programs: instructional programs that combine subject matter ordinarily taught separately, such as history, literature, or science, into learnings under a single organizational structure.

interdisciplinary teams: an organizational arrangement of two or more teachers representing different subject areas. The team of teachers share the same students, schedule, areas of the school, and occasionally the responsibility for teaching more than one subject. This uses block scheduling techniques and puts curriculum planning, grouping, and scheduling decisions in the hands of a team of teaches who are aware of the changing instructional needs of the students.

interscholastic athletic programs: competitive athletic activities for middle level students that take place after school hours with teams from other schools. Interscholastic programs most commonly include basketball, track, cross country, volleyball, flag football, baseball, and wrestling.

intramural athletic programs: athletic activities that take place during the school day and in which all students are encouraged or required to participate. The emphasis of these programs is cooperation rather than competition.

self-contained teachers or classroom: an arrangement in which students learn most subjects from a single teacher. Still the predominant approach in elementary schools, the concept allows the teacher to become familiar with students by dealing with fewer numbers of students while teaching most subjects to them. The demands for specialization have limited the effective use of the self-contained approach in middle level schools.

team planning: the process followed by a group of teachers who plan interdependent instructional objectives, evaluation procedures, and management techniques appropriate to the group of students in their charge. This provides the necessary subject matter specialization required beyond the elementary grades and helps teachers on the team become aware of holistic needs of students. Team planning can achieve fairness and consistency of expectations for students.

team teaching: two or more teachers with the shared responsibility for planning, conducting, and evaluating learning experiences for a common group of students. Team teaching grows out of team planning but cannot function without the foundation of team planning described above. Team planning allows teachers to plan interdependent learning objectives, but team teaching extends this into commonly planned classroom procedures and activities. Team teaching becomes a formalized approach to instructional strategies and tactics.